

# Bagging a McDougal

The Macnab comes to Sussex

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS MARTIN

When Clemen Von Bechtolsheim landed a 2lb rainbow from the clear waters of one of the Ashbourne lakes he automatically became a member of a very exclusive sporting club - he had achieved a McDougal.

This had been the final instalment of a three-part act of shooting a cock pheasant, tying a fly from its feathers and then using said fly to catch a trout.

A lowland variant of the famed Macnab (salmon, brace of grouse and stag in one day), the McDougal is the brainchild of Douglas Chalmers, who owns Ashbourne, a small sporting estate just west of Battle, Sussex, having bought it nine years ago on retiring from the City. "I was a Lloyd's insurance broker, and having spent some time in the Caribbean was then sent to Hong Kong to help start up operations for HSBC. I stayed nearly 20 years before returning, only to find the City had become a very different place.

"As an anglicised Scot I love my salmon fishing and shooting. And like any typical Scot I bang on about how good everything is in Scotland - yet of

course continued to live in the South!

"Anyhow, to cut a long story short I began looking for a sporting venue, and after a couple of years came across this place, buying it in 1998." It is indeed a very pretty spot running to 85 acres and has two lakes (of one and two acres). The focus was very much to run it for summer corporate entertaining, offering groups either shooting (clays) or fishing days, or indeed a mixture of both. There is also a resident private trout syndicate.

It has been a success, then over a beer a couple of years ago Douglas was chatting to long term friend Richard Sheehan about ways in which he could use the facility in winter, when the alternative Macnab was mooted. "At first it seemed silly, but the idea got better the more we thought about it. Initially we went for McDouglas as a name, but it sounded like a clan or a tartan, then Richard came up with McDougal." It was duly christened.

The first day was held for a group of four who shot four drives, tied the flies and fished the lake. Its success exceeded all expectations. Though it



THE TROUT THAT COMPLETED A MCDUGAL



ABOVE: BETWEEN DRIVES.  
 LEFT: A BIRD IN THE BAG!  
 BELOW LEFT: EXPECTANT AT THE START OF A DRIVE... RICHARD SHEEHAN.  
 BELOW: FLY TYING WELL UNDERWAY...CHRIS ELLIOT AND PETER BUSS.



should be said that Douglas Chalmers is a natural host who was now finding himself in his element. Many more similar days have followed - around 12-15 per season. "These are only small days of probably only three birds per Gun - but are great fun. Our keeper Roy Foster does a tremendous job and the drives are good. There may be a few woodcock, though they don't count towards the McDougal."

Providing the Guns shoot straight they should all bag a cock pheasant (hens can be shot but don't count) before retiring to lunch. On the day of our visit in January there was a lovely buzz about the place and all participants were caught up in the spirit. They were given champagne and smoked salmon before a good lunch, and a glass (or two)

of claret, after which they were shown how to tie the fly, and before being left to their own devices.

Then... to the water! And that's when Clemens hit the jackpot. Despite being January the unseasonable weather meant that fish were taking, and Clemens landed a beauty. He was duly rewarded with a McDougal trophy, a paperweight with his name and fly encased in it, and a bottle of champagne. And everyone went home with a smile on their face.

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LEFT: LOOKING GOOD.  
 DOUGLAS CHALMERS (RIGHT) MAKES THE PRESENTATION TO CLEMENS VON BECHTOLSHEIM.

